

September 26, 2023

EBC File: 15110-30/2022/236

Steven Rice
Candidate for Electoral Area Director of Election Area I, Thompson-Nicola Regional District
Via email

ENFORCEMENT NOTICE

Dear Steven Rice:

This letter addresses a contravention under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* (LECFA) and comprises an Enforcement Notice under Part 2 of *Policy 36.3 Administration of Monetary Penalties under the Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

Elections BC provided you with a copy of the Investigator's report into this matter, which included his preliminary findings. You replied to the investigation report; however, you did not provide any information relevant to the current matter.

Background:

You were a candidate for Electoral Area Director of Election Area I in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District in the 2022 General Local Election. For the 2022 General Local Election, the pre-campaign period started July 18, 2022, and ended September 16, 2022, and the campaign period started September 17, 2022 and ended on general voting day, on October 15, 2022.

On September 17, 2022, Elections BC received a complaint regarding an election sign that promoted you Electoral Area Director. The complaint noted that the sign appeared to be missing the required authorization statements.

Elections BC's Compliance team contacted you to remind you about the requirement to include the respective authorization statements on your election advertisements. I understand that you were already in the process of changing and updating the signs to include the authorization statement after EBC's Compliance team had contacted you.

The file was then forwarded to the Elections BC's Investigations team for follow up.

The Elections BC Investigator reached out to you and requested copies of the invoices and information about the election signs and the creation process.

Your records indicated that your campaign spent \$877.63 on the signs.

Legislation:

Section 44 (1) of the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* requires that a candidate who sponsors election advertising ensure that the advertisement does the following:

- identifies the financial agent,

- indicates that it was authorized by the financial agent,
- gives a BC telephone number, an email address or a BC mailing address at which the financial agent may be contacted regarding the advertising

Section 7(1) of LECFA defines election advertising as:

7 (1) Subject to subsection (2) and any applicable regulations, election advertising is the transmission to the public by any means,

(a) during the campaign period, of any of the following:

(i) a communication that promotes or opposes, directly or indirectly, the election of a candidate or an elector organization that is endorsing a candidate, including a communication that takes a position on an issue with which the candidate or elector organization is associated;

(ii) assent voting advertising that is election advertising under section 8 (3) [assent voting advertising that is election advertising];

(iii) any other communications prescribed by regulation, and

(b) during the pre-campaign period for a general local election, of any of the following:

(i) a communication that promotes or opposes, directly or indirectly, the election of a candidate or an elector organization that is endorsing a candidate;

(ii) assent voting advertising that is election advertising under section 8 (3);

(iii) any other communications prescribed by regulation.

Section 10 of LECFA sets out the pre-campaign and campaign periods for a local election:

10 (1) The election period in relation to an election is the period that

(a) begins, as applicable,

(i) in the case of an election that is part of a general local election, at the start of the calendar year in which the election is held,

(ii) in the case of a by-election, on the day the local authority office that is to be filled by the by-election becomes vacant, or

(iii) in the case of any other election, on the date specified by or determined under the regulations, and

(b) ends at the beginning of the campaign period for the election.

(1.1) The pre-campaign period in relation to a general local election is the period that

(a) begins on the eighty-ninth day before general voting day for the election, and (b) ends on the twenty-ninth day before general voting day for the election.

(2) The campaign period in relation to an election is the period that

(a) begins on the twenty-eighth day before general voting day for the election, and

(b) ends, as applicable,

(i) in the case of an election by voting, at the close of general voting for the election, or

(ii) in the case of an election by acclamation, at the end of general voting day.

(3) The assent voting proceedings period in relation to non-election assent voting is the period that

(a) begins on the twenty-eighth day before general voting day for the assent voting, and

(b) ends at the close of general voting for the assent voting.

Analysis and Determination:

I have carefully reviewed the Investigator's report, and I concur with their preliminary conclusions. The signs did not provide an authorization statement as required in section 44(1) of LECFA.

I find that the signs that your campaign sponsored during the campaign period contravened section 44(1) of LECFA.

Monetary Penalty:

Because of my finding above, s. 68.25(1) of LECFA requires me to issue an administrative monetary penalty of up to \$5,000 against you.

In assessing this penalty, I note the following:

- The lack of an authorization statement would not likely have misled a reader to conclude that the signs were sponsored by another individual or organization – the transparency purpose of the Act had been substantially met.
- Once contacted by Elections BC, you were already in the process of bringing yourself into compliance.
- Your campaign has been cooperative with our investigation.
- You have previously run as a candidate for councillor in the general local elections.
- You have not previously been the subject of a monetary penalty under LECFA.

Based on these considerations, I make the following finding:

- Steven Rice contravened section 44(1) of LECFA, and must pay a penalty of \$200 to the Chief Electoral Officer of B.C., under section 68.25(2)(a) of that act.

Review/Court Relief:

You may request a review of this determination by an Adjudicator. A request must be made in writing and must be received by the Investigator within 14 days after the date on which the Subject received the Enforcement Notice. The request must state the grounds on which the request for review is made. The Adjudicator is not bound by the Investigator's determinations or reasons in this Enforcement Notice, and must consider the matter afresh and with an open mind.

You may also seek relief from the BC Supreme Court from the monetary penalties under section 68.26 of LECFA. You may wish to seek legal advice prior to requesting relief.

Penalty Payment:

Under *Policy 36.3 Administration of Monetary Penalties under the Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, you have 40 days from today's date to pay the monetary penalties. Payments can be made by cheque to the Minister of Finance, C/O Elections BC at the address below:

Mailing Address:

PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9J6

Physical Location:

Suite 100 – 1112 Fort Street
Victoria, BC
250-387-5305

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Barnes", written in a cursive style.

Adam Barnes
Director of Investigations